

of minor importance, in my opinion, and shouldn't be overrated. The American class struggle, it seems fairly clear, still to produce (and will inevitably produce) its intellectual workers. The present little fuss is just an outpost skirmish. But it's no reason for not putting up as good a fight as you can.

## Branville Hicks:

It is hard for me to know whether I ought to be grateful for or regret the fact that I fell under the influence of Wilsonian liberalism. On the one hand, training in that school kept me from blind admiration of big business, belief in the Republican party, and the more chauvinistic forms of patriotism. On the other, it gave me a lot of comforting theories that obscured the real issues at stake in the years during and after the war. Needless to say, there was nothing at Harvard, in the years from 1919 to 1925, that could turn my liberalism into radicalism. The surprising thing is, indeed, that my liberal attitudes survived at all. I even came, in the face of the unquestioning patriotism of one part of my associates and the cynical indifference of another part, a throughgoing pacifist.

I emerged, in short, a fairly typical liberal, with a mild interest in socialism, a strong faith in pacifism, and the usual conviction that the desired changes in the social order could be brought about by the dissemination of sound ideas. But in the next four years liberalism was steadily undermined. Reading made me sceptical of liberal reforms; Coolidge prosperity made it easy for me to forget that reforms were necessary. The one event that moved me deeply in those years was the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti. This completely crushed my faith in liberalism, for I saw on the one hand the detestable treachery of such liberals as Lowell who had helped to bring about the murder, and on the other the absolute helplessness of the liberals who had tried to stop it.

I could no longer accept the pleasant theories of liberalism, but nothing had taken their place. How easy it was to drift in 1927, 1928, and 1929! Though the social order still seemed viciously efficient and indecently corrupt, there was, I consoled myself, nothing that I could do about. I was very much occupied with personal problems and the tasks of literary criticism, and I managed to forget about the world in which I lived. To my shame I confess it, I was as much a victim of the myth of prosperity as I had been making fabulous profits in Wall Street instead of the meager salary of a college instructor.

Then came the crash! I did not lose any money; I had none to lose. But the depression wiped out the illusion of security, as I saw friends and even relatives losing their jobs, and witnessed every time I went on the street the spectacle of the unemployed. I no longer tried to conceal from myself the fact that the system was rotten, but still I could see nothing for me to do. Liberal attitudes persisted, even though liberal theories had been destroyed, and whenever communism was mentioned I reacted like any good liberal with talk of pacifism, freedom of speech, and intellectual integrity.

It took a long time, as a matter of fact, to get the virus of liberalism out of my system. As some of my friends turned to communism, long conversations, in which I tried to attack their opinions, showed me the weakness of my position, but I clung to every straw. There was even a time when I argued that our only hope was in a beneficent, planned capitalism. Nothing could show me more clearly how far I would go in defense of my old conceptions, or to assert that the future of society depended on the intelligence and benevolence of such men as Henry Ford and Owen D. Young was, after all, to deny everything I had professed to believe. Yet even this ridiculous subterfuge had its value: it forced me to admit that the choice lay between industrial feudalism and revolution. The necessity of defending the idea of planned capitalism led me to study the proposals made by George Soule, Stuart Chase, and the like, and when I attempted to translate the vague idea of planning into concrete projects I could no longer conceal from myself the preposterousness of the notion. There was, I at last saw clearly, but one way out.

I have traced the intellectual steps in my change of opinion, and it is easier to see them than it is to see the various sorts of economic pressure that were affecting me. Yet I know well enough that both the questions I asked and the answers I arrived at were products of the particular situation in which I found myself. If I am able, however gradually, to break through the fog of self-deception and confusion, it was because my experience at this time

was precisely what it was. My present attitude is the product of the depression as if I had been forced out of the streets to beg for food.

The time came, then, when I was prepared to say that capitalism must be destroyed and that its destruction could be brought about only by a mass movement for the expropriation of the expropriators. But I was a long way from understanding what these propositions meant. I believed a time was coming when the sheep would be separated from the goats, and I thought I knew on which side I should align myself. I did not realize that the issue was already clear, the lines already established, the battle already begun. Especially I failed to see that the acceptance of these propositions must inevitably affect my whole attitude towards life.

It happened that at this time—less than two years ago—I was preparing to write a book on American literature since the Civil War. I had already seen that the chief problems writers faced in the period I was considering were those raised by industrialism, and I was trying to discover what attitudes had been adopted towards those problems and what these various attitudes had achieved in literature. I was, as everything I have said indicates, too confused about the issues of my own time, to see clearly the issues of the past. But as soon as I began to reconsider those issues in terms of the decision I had reached, they became more and more definite. As I read a little in the works of Marx and his followers, I found the answer to one question after another that had been bothering me. I realized that I had done more than reach a decision that might have consequences in some vague future; I had discovered a literary method of great and immediate importance.

I have no illusions, I trust, about the importance of criticism in this period of transition. The battle that is going on must be fought and won in quite a different arena. A person born in the middle class as I was, educated in bourgeois institutions, more or less professionally interested in literature, is poorly prepared to take a leading part. Yet the fight goes on on many fronts, and minor engagements as well as major must be fought and won. If the work for which I have been trained is not of primary importance, it is not without its own significance. Criticism must be a weapon if it is not to be merely an amusing game, and I now know in what cause that weapon, so far as I am concerned, shall be wielded.

## Sherwood Anderson:

There is a sense in which I believe that the little stories in *Winesburg, Ohio* are as revolutionary as anything I shall ever be able to write.

You do not need to go far back into the history of writing to come to the place where the life of a common man or woman, the worker, was not thought interesting. Such lives were not thought of as material for the story teller at all. In the old fiction, old poetry, old plays the workers and peasants were invariably introduced as comic figures. Go to your Shakespeare and you will see what I mean. It is so in all the older fiction. The notion that the worker, in the factory, in the sweat-shop, in the mine, might be as sensitive and as easily hurt as the well-to-do man or woman, and that the strange thing in life we call beauty might be as alive in such a one—man or woman—as in the rich and successful, is still new.

If our present capitalist system did in fact produce, even for the few, the kind of glowing lives some of our romancers pretend I would myself hesitate about deserting capitalism. It doesn't.

I am only trying to say this in explanation. I myself wrote, when I was a very young man, a long book I called *Why I Believe in Socialism*. Afterward, I tore it up. It was very badly written. Among my earlier books I wrote the novel *Marching Men*, an attempt to get at the every day lives of coal miners in a middle western coal mining town.

I believe and am bound to believe that those of you who are revolutionists will get the most help out of such men as myself not by trying to utilize each talents as we have directly as writers of propaganda but in leaving us as free as possible to strike, by our stories out of American life, into the deeper facts.

I mean that the lives of those who now succeed in getting money and power in our present individualistic capitalistic society are neither happy nor successful lives. That illusion also needs to be destroyed.

When it comes to the others, the workers, the real producers,

SEPTEMBER, 1932

the down trodden people, there stories need to be told. I think I have always wanted to tell that story and still want to tell it. It is my one great passion. If *Winesburg Ohio* tries to tell the story of the defeated figures of an old American individualistic small town life, then my new book *Beyond Desire* is but carrying these same people forward into the new American life and into the whirl and roar of modern machines. I do not believe my own impulses have changed.

## Edmund Wilson:

Thank you for asking me to contribute to the intellectual autobiography series, but I've got so much else on my hands just now that I couldn't possibly do the article. There's nothing to my story anyway. I've always had about the same general tendencies—was imbued with literary socialism at college and used to contribute to the *Masses* after the War—but it was only recently in trying to formulate a new policy for *The New Republic* after Croly's death that I investigated Marxism and really understood the Marxist position.

## Michael Gold

### Why I am a Communist:

In 1914 there was an unemployment crisis in America, and I was one of its victims. I was 18 years old, a factory worker and shipping clerk with five years experience, and the chief support of a fatherless family. Unemployment was no academic matter to me, but the blackest and most personal tragedy.

Well, the hungry workers were raising hell in New York. There were demonstrations, marches, and raids on fashionable Fifth Avenue churches by the unemployed. The Anarchists were then still a brilliant and fearless revolutionary group in America, and they led the fight in New York.

I blundered into a big Union Square meeting, where Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Leonard Abbott and other anarchists spoke. The cops, as usual, pointed the anarchist denunciations of capitalism by smashing into the meeting, cracking the skulls and ribs of everyone present. I saw a woman knocked down by a beefy cop's club. She screamed, and instinctively I ran across the square to help her. I was knocked down myself, booted, and managed to escape the hospital only by sheer luck.

I have always been grateful to that cop and his club. For one thing, he introduced me to literature and revolution. I had not read a single book in five years; nothing except the sporting page of newspapers. I hadn't thought much about anything except baseball, jobs, food, sleep and Sundays at Coney Island. I was a prize fight fanatic and amateur boxer. Now I grew so bitter because of that cop that I went around to the anarchist Ferrer School and discovered books—I discovered history, poetry, science, and the class struggle.

Nobody who has not gone through this proletarian experience can ever understand the fever that seized me in the next year. I read myself almost blind each night after work. My mind woke up like a suppressed volcano. I can never discharge this personal debt to the revolutionary movement—it gave me a mind.

And I think I can understand what the Soviet state means today to millions of grateful Russian workers and peasants—it has given them a mind.

I was an anarchist for several years. The poetry, the strong passions and naive ideology of that movement appealed to a literary adolescent. I found a job as night porter at the Adams Express Company depot on West 47th Street. I wrestled big trunks and half-ton cases from seven at night until seven the next morning. I sweated, but in my mind I lived in the idealistic world of Shelley, Blake, Walt Whitman, Kropotkin. I was a revolutionist, but it never occurred to me to do anything about it. Nothing, really, was demanded of me.

It was the I. W. W. who made me conscious of the proletarian basis of the revolution. I left New York, had some road experiences, and was present in several Wobbly strikes. The history of this heroic organization has still to be written. It is decadent, but the veteran leaders of American Communism—Bill, Earl Browder, George, and others. (But of course nobody ought feel grateful to this to the bourgeois Civil Liberties liberals who now run the poor old Wobblies).

George, and others. (But of course nobody ought feel grateful to this to the bourgeois Civil Liberties liberals who now run the poor old Wobblies).

The War came; the Russian Revolution; I was against the War. I was 100 per cent with the Bolsheviks. It seemed marvelous then, beyond any words, and it still is as marvellous, that the workers' state had come down from the clouds of Shelley's dream and established itself on this earth.

We formed a Red Guard of about a thousand youth in New York, which Hugo Gellert and I joined, to go to Russia and fight for the cause. Our captain went to Washington to interview the State Department, but they told him that if we wanted to we had better enlist for France. This, of course, didn't suit a bunch of young Red Guards.

And now I will end the autobiography by saying that the Russian Revolution forced me to read Lenin. I read his pamphlet *State and Revolution*, and for the first time, really seemed to understand the necessary historical steps by which the world could be changed from a filthy capitalist jungle into an earthly paradise of socialism.

Till then, the revolution had been a queer mixture in my mind that now is difficult to describe. One half of me knew the proletarian realities of bastardly foremen, lousy jobs, the misery of reading the want ads each morning, cops' clubs, etc. The other half was full of the most extraordinary mystic hash, the religion of reading. Let me confess it now—I took Shelley, Blake, Walt Whitman quite literally. They were my real guides to revolutionary action. But our great teacher Lenin, clarified everything for me.

The Communist dream is beautiful, he seemed to say in those axe-like words, the greatest man has ever formed. The revolution is the highest poetry of the human race. But to be myopic about it means admitting it is only a dream, and can never be realized. A revolutionist ought never lose sight of the wonderful goal—(Anarchism, so Lenin stated it)—but he is a traitor, a misleader and a source of dangerous confusion if for even a moment he neglects the daily class struggle, the links in the revolutionary chain.

Did one really want the socialist world? Then one must discard every bit of romantic nonsense, one must become as practical as this business as the enemy, who was never romantic, but who shot and jailed romantics and amateurs.

Yes, I learned from Leninism never to lose sight of the ultimate goal; also never to lose sight of the practical steps in attaining it. I cannot tell what a great lesson this was to me; I can only say that its effect was to make me study economics for the first time.

Today I might sum up my attitude in a few paragraphs. Communism can't be summed up that way; it is a new world larger than that found by Columbus, and thousands of poets, economists, literary critics, and above all, workers, are mapping it out and creating its history.

But this is a symposium, space is valuable, so here are a few ideas:

1. We must have a Socialist world. Capitalism is literally destroying the human race; it has broken down, it can no longer feed the multitudes; it is a bandit, also, and must be executed before it murders another ten million young men in another war.

2. The intellectuals, the teachers, engineers, critics, art photographers, ballet masters, etc. haven't the numbers, or the economic power or the will or the sheer necessity of ushering in a socialist world. Only the working class satisfies these requirements. The intellectuals free itself it is forced to bring in socialism. The intellectuals have a favored servant status in capitalism; and their chief aim will remain fascist. Like good flunkies the majority of them will remain incorrigibly "loyalist." They will try to patch up the master's failing fortunes; they will invent "planning" schemes, elect Norman Thomas as President to stave off a revolution (Socialist revolution); they will flock around a Woodrow Wilson, a Franklin Roosevelt, and then a Mussolini; yes, they will hang on as saviours for capitalism; we know too well these liberals who are liberal in America, but now may be found in the Fascist ranks of Kesseloff-28517 Orient. Perhaps 10 per cent of them will want socialism, and will join the workingclass ranks and fight enormously. But this will be the cream of the intellectual

3. Only the workingclass can bring in Socialism. The one problem of our time, therefore, is how the workingclass can be organized and led to the conquest of the state and to the overthrow of capitalism. There is no other problem.

# HOW I CAME TO COMMUNISM

Waldo Frank

## Where I Stand and How I Got Here

The editors of *New Masses* write to me of "the marked movement among the intellectuals toward the left"; and they ask me for an "intellectual autobiography" of how I got that way. What they want to know, of course, is in my books. And what they are really asking, is a 2,000 word digest of my books for readers who, presumably, are too busy preparing the Revolution to find time to read them. Personally, I feel that if a necessarily superficial digest of a man's books is worth while, it would repay the effort to read the books, themselves. Moreover, although there may be some critic smart enough to get into so brief a space the essence of what I have labored to put into fifteen volumes, I am sure I can not do it.

My "movement toward the left" is a steady, logical evolution in my published works. It is not really a "movement" at all in the sense of a *displacement*—like that of a man, for instance, who moves from Brooklyn to the Bronx. It is really a clarifying and solidifying and organizing of convictions present in my work from its beginning: it is a sharpening and shifting of the focus of my work, due to the economic and psychologic shifts of the America I live in.

I have never been an economist or sociologist. I have always been, first of all, an artist—the kind of artist, however, who is interested not only in individuals but also in peoples, in cultures, in ideas. Those of my creations that deal with imaginary persons or groups of persons are "fiction": those that deal with actual historic peoples are harder to classify, but they are as essentially works of art as my novels. I am, moreover, a product of the New York upper middle class. But by the time I was finished college, I knew that I did not belong with my class, and that I could not go into the money-making racket which went by such names as "business" or "the law." A couple of years of newspaper work were sufficient to convince me that the capitalistic order was rotten from top to bottom: rotten in its churches, in its politics, in its business, in its arts, in its intellectual life. But this conviction brought with it no clear idea as to the way out. The trouble, it seemed to me, was with human nature. And of course, it was—and it is. Men and women, I thought, might individually achieve, against great odds, some truth and beauty. It was a desperately slow process; but at the time I knew no other. The Marxian idea of a class, potentially representative of mankind, and potentially destined to destroy the stratified greed and violence that had become Society, was still far beyond me.

Nonetheless, social emotions and social ideas were, from the beginning, conscious factors in my books. And it would be possible, if I had the time, to isolate and trace their evolution from one book to the next; although in so doing I should necessarily distort the true nature of my works, if I disregarded other vital and integral elements.

My first published novel (written before we entered the War) was *The Unwelcome Man*. It is the story of a sensitive youth, without unusual talents, in petty bourgeois American society. The story arraigns this society for its sordidness, its cruelty, its sterility; it depicts the fate of a lad who rebels against it, yet who rebels hopelessly, since he is equipped with but ordinary powers, since he is alone, and since—above all—he possesses no ideology except that of his own class.

Then the War came to America and it forced me, who had always been most at home in the arts and in philosophy, to think for the first time in political terms. I saw soon enough that the War was not what the Nations said it was: that it was the result of imperialistic capitalism and, more deeply, of the state of mind polarized by the capitalistic order. Before this, I had condemned capitalism's culture, I had also condemned its economic system. But I had gone no farther than a vague utopian social-opotkin, but not Marxism. Which meant, that

I had faith only in individual action. Now, I read Marx. But I was still extremely far from applying his laws to American conditions.

At the time, I was editing "The Seven Arts" with James Oppenheim and Van Wyck Brooks. All three of us called ourselves socialists; but our magazine had begun as a purely literary organ for national expression. Our "master" was Walt Whitman. Now, however, with the War upon us, we were faced with the necessity of action. We opposed America's entry into the War. We supported Eugene Debs, (although we did not think much of his mind). We published John Reed, and the magnificent revolutionary articles of Randolph Bourne. Secret service men began to infest our offices; the papers listed us among "enemies from within." We went down with flying colors.

When the draft came, I registered as an objector "not for religious reasons but against imperialist war." And while I waited for the military police to send me to Leavenworth (they never got to me), I began a novel which only now I am really writing; and of which I published a part under the title *The Dark Mother*.

My rebellion and my hopes at this time, were expressed in my first critical volume *Our America*, which appeared in 1919. Let me quote from the first paragraph:

"No American can hope to run a journal, win public office, successfully advertise a soap or write a popular novel who does not insist upon the idealistic basis of his country. A peculiar sort of ethical rapture has earned the term *American*. Woodrow Wilson is only its latest adept: George Washington was by no means its first. And the reason is probably at least in part that no land has ever sprung so nakedly as ours from a direct and conscious material impulse. The history of the colonization of America is the reflex result of economic movements in the Mother countries . . ."

And the book's last sentence:

" . . . In a dying world, creation is revolution."

*Our America*, although essentially a poet's portrait of his world, was an attack on our capitalistic system, viewed as a culture. It also was an appeal to the future—to "revolution." But it did not envisage the way to this future in Marxian terms—i.e., in terms of the class war. The masses, whom it called "the multitudes in Whitman," must take over and make over America; but the book stressed as the dynamic force making for revolution, the spiritual and cultural values in America: the Indian, the immigrant, the message of men like Whitman, Lincoln, Spinoza, Marx. And its direct appeal was not to a proletarian class (with whom I had little contact), but to a small band of gallant writers who were to lead the "multitude"—and who, of course, failed to materialize.

I returned to fiction; and wrote in the next four years my three most important novels: *Rahab*, *City Block*, *Holiday*. These were pure forms of experimental art: lyrical and dionysian. But even in them, there is a strong line of social implication—which perhaps is one reason why all three of these novels are translated into Russian. *Holiday* is a novel of the South. It really has but two collective characters: "white town" and "nigger town" of a Gulf state. It depicts the encounter of these two characters—the economic subjugation of the Negro to the white, and the emotional subjugation of the white to the Negro. It draws the clash to its tragic passionate conclusion: the lynching. Perhaps I can best suggest the social quality of the book by saying that the Negro press hailed it, and called it the "modern Uncle Tom's Cabin"—a compliment which, I fear, did not flatter the artist in me.

*Rahab* is, in its bare social lines, the story of a Southern girl of the middle class, ruined by her evangelical Christian husband, who, in contact with the underworld, she finds what must be the essence of true religion: the facing of the reality of life. And *City Block* is a kind of collective novel about a New York proletarian street. These books are not "proletarian literature" in the sense that their characters consciously call for a Marxian revolution. Neither is *Winesburg* or *Mardi*.



# SYMPOSIUM

although Sherwood Anderson is deeply a proletarian novelist. But let me point out, that to have made the characters of my "city block" call for revolution in 1922 would have been bad art. It would have been contrary to the nature of these characters. Only when the proletariat itself becomes consciously revolutionary, can a good proletarian novelist so depict it. That consciousness is just beginning in the U. S. To demand it of novels faithful to the truth as it existed a decade ago, is absurd.

Now again, the great American problem claimed me: the problem of creating a true new world in our hemisphere. *Our America* had been but a prelude of this theme, which I intended to treat symphonically in a group of books. My purpose was not mainly critical: it was to create portraits of the American worlds—of the human sources of our energy—which would constructively lead forth into the future. One of the results of *Our America* had been to put me in touch with the radical students and writers of South America. And they made me see that America did not stop at the Rio Grande: it went all the way down to Argentina. Now, you cannot understand the U. S. without knowing England and Europe. And similarly you cannot understand America Hispana, without knowing Spain, Portugal, North Africa. So I went there. And later on, I went to Mexico and South America.

I wrote *Virgin Spain* and *America Hispana*—cultural portraits of these peoples. I cannot, here, possibly go into even the simplest exposition of what these books contain; their ideological content is too complex, and besides, they are primarily portraits—works of art. Here, all I can say is, that I felt very strongly the relevance of both the Catholic and Semitic traditions in Spain, and of the American Indian cultures, to the problem of creating a world in which the person, knowing his true place in the collective group, should be a true person. The Spaniard has a sense of the whole which needs only to be transposed from its false Christian symbols to prepare him for a true communism. (I point out the analogy of the Russians, who also had a Catholic background, in my recent *Dawn in Russia*). And the great Indian cultures have always had communistic roots; have always preserved that sense of the individual as a social integer, which we must achieve in North America, before we can think of overcoming the false individualism that is the essence of our capitalistic order.

I wrote these two books primarily for the United States, since I was convinced of the usefulness for ourselves of understanding these peoples. But oddly enough, the books have been understood chiefly in the Hispanic countries. Here, they were shallowly regarded as "travel books." (They are no more travel books, than *Don Quixote* is a travel book). In Spain, in Mexico, in Argentina, they are understood as revolutionary analyses of the genius of races—attempts to lift up, into consciousness and therefore into force, the potential promise of the American peoples.

Well allotted space is running short, and I haven't done much more than mention a few of my books. They may be said to represent, socially, an evolution from personal revolt against bourgeois society (*The Unwelcome Man, Our America*) to the discovery of dynamic forces and values in our modern epoch, potential for the creating of a new revolutionary world (*The Rediscovery of America, America Hispana*). In all my books, however, the stress is on the primary material that must be recreated—i.e., mankind; and not on the economic and political method that must be the first outward step in the re-creative task. The reason for this is, that I am not an economist, not a professional revolutionist; but an artist, a psychologist, and cultural historian.

Where, then, is my "movement to the left?" For it exists. In my books, it is not a movement, it is a steady evolution. But in my active life, it has recently been something of a "movement."

I will put down briefly why this is, and why it will continue to be . . .

1. I have lost my last vestige of faith in the middle-classes, in all middle class action, and in the efficacy of intellectual groups who are identified, either openly or indirectly, with middle class values.

2. I do not romanticize or idealize the workers and peasants.

I am no follower of Rousseau, vaguely dreaming of the perfection of "the natural man." But to have faith in human life at all, in this epoch of bourgeois decadence, must mean henceforth to have faith in the proletarians and farmers who alone as a class have not been hopelessly corrupted by the sources and methods of the capitalistic order. The artist and thinker, from now on, must choose: either to hope and fight with the masses; or to despair and surrender alone. At bottom, Marxism is a methodology for creating a human culture—in place of the slave cultures which history reveals. In this sense, which underlies his great economic discoveries, I am better equipped to understand Marx; and I accept him wholly. However, Marx did not complete the task of providing a methodology for the new culture. He began, but he did not conclude the work. And he knew. To be a good Marxian is to be creative enough to go beyond Marx.

3. I accept wholly the Marxian law, that a revolutionary proletarian class is the chief instrument for creating the communist society. And I agree with Marx, wholly, that only this communist society can go forward to the creating of a real human culture.

4. I believe that the intellectuals of all kinds must definitely and actively join hands with the revolutionary proletarian class, that they must take a militant part, as intellectuals, henceforth in the class war, and that it is their duty to make their position unequivocally clear to all the workers.

5. The world is in crisis. Men and women are starving; they are being demoralized by unemployment; when they attempt even to protest they are being bludgeoned back to slavery by the armed mobs of Business fascism. At such a time, I cannot forever remain in my library, although my essential work lies there. I must from time to time make clear, in language simpler than the language of my books—in the language of physical comradeship—my solidarity with the people.

6. The world is in crisis, and there is no time to lose. The revolutionary tomorrow must be prepared today. Otherwise, it may come too late—too late to save mankind from the destruction of capitalistic war, and (still worse) from the moral siphilis of capitalistic Peace.

7. However, I shall not lose sight of what has been, and continue to be, my share in the work of world-creation. Nor shall I let my emotions in the daily crisis swerve me. That would be deadly sentimentalism. The task of the creative artist, the task of the creator of revolutionary cultural values, is important today as it has never been before.

August 14, 1932.

## Clifton B. Fadiman:

My particular turn to the left was a simple matter. I can't write 1500 words about it.

History—mainly in the form of the crisis—became my teacher while I was still young enough to learn.

Another thing—my work, for many years, has been mainly in the field of business. You can accept business (another word for America); you can be cynical about it ('civilized' in the *New Yorker* manner); or you can take a good look at it. Unless you're a big shot in business—and even then, frequently—accepting business or being cynical about it makes you out a damned fool. I'm one of the smallest shots in the locker—and I got tired of being a damned fool.

There were a couple of other cut-and-dried factors. During the summer of 1931 I happened to spend time with people who knew more than I did. They too, perhaps, were just history disguised as individuals. I couldn't help learning from them.

Also I got a little sour on the sort of stuff I was writing. It didn't seem capable of development. The point of view behind it was inadequate for the interpretation of events, particularly cultural events. And, as I am temperamentally indisposed toward the only one other point of view possible. There was a certain amount of imitation, masquerading as history, whatever you choose to call it—still another name for history.

The present left turn of any one person or any small group

Many groups have fought for this leadership. By now his- has given all of them a chance at power, and it is possible ate exactly what each will do to bring in socialism.

The Anarchists may be dismissed as a small and moribund Their chief form of action today is not against capitalism, against the Russian Revolution. The I. W. W. and syndicalist vement can be described in the same terms. The Socialist and mmunist parties are the chief international rivals for leadership the working class. And both have controlled great nations.

The Socialists may best be analyzed, perhaps, by their ons in Germany, where they made a revolution. The Socialist ers there have swung into the ranks of reaction. They mur- Liebknecht and Luxemburg at the beginning of their regime, they ended by advising the working class to vote for Von enburg. They established no socialism. They tolerated sm, even made compacts with it, until it grew strong enough destroy them. Their political strategy had as goal not the use of workers' rights and the establishment of socialism, but patching up of capitalism. The same story could be told of say Macdonald's England, or Chiang Kai Shek's China, or Japan, where two-thirds of the Socialist party moved over into ew Fascist Party to back their native imperialists in the rape Manchuria. Is all this true, or isn't it? How can anyone end such a party? How can anyone say any longer that this ernational Socialist party can be trusted to bring in socialism? en in America they run true to form, as in the case of their ader, Morris Hillquit. He acted as lawyer for certain Czarist illionaires who tried to seize Soviet funds on the grounds that heir oil wells had been nationalized, (Socialism). Yes, Hillquit, a Socialist leader, pleaded in a long brief that Socialism is egal. And Norman Thomas, the Socialist president, in a long ech said that Socialism meant confiscation, and that he was inst confiscation. In Milwaukee a Socialist Mayor gives \$1.31 worth of food to each starving unemployed family per week, and eats them up when they demonstrate for more. Is this a fact, or isn't it? And is it Socialism?

7. The Socialists are the great alibi merchants of the modern world. Their constant plea, when in power, has always been that he time was not yet ripe for Socialism. But the time was not ipe either, in Russia, when the Communists took power. The difficulties were the most enormous and heartbreaking that ever faced a group of leaders. But in the midst of war, revolution, amine, an armed intervention by seventeen capitalist nations, the Communists struck the first blow for Socialism. They have gone on; nobody lies any longer that Russia is swinging back to capital-ism. While capitalism strangles in the fatal web of its own con-tradictions, the Soviet state grows stronger and wins new victories for Socialism. The majestic thunder of the Five Year Plan has shaken the world. We can trust this Party to bring in socialism, therefore; it has already begun the historic task.

8. It is an international party, with units in each country. It as developed tactics, a discipline, a literature; and to it daily re attracted the most fearless and intelligent elements of the working class. It makes mistakes. It suffers defeats. But it marches on. Its discipline may seem harsh at times, but when he world war comes the Communist International will not split p into national units fighting each other under the capitalist lags, as did the Socialist International. It will not betray us; or it purges itself constantly of every taint of capitalist influ-ence. We can trust this Party; but we cannot trust the Hillquits, Ramsay Macdonalds and Schiedemanns of the Socialist movement.

9. Is there another instrument, another political party in the world today, as well-tempered, as fearless, as studious and flex-ible, in as deadly earnest about the birth of Socialism as this omunist Party? If there is not, then whoever injures or iticizes this party without helping it, whoever forms rival par-tes or sects, is of necessity a traitor to the coming of socialism.

10. I have wanted for fifteen years one supreme thing. I have ented it more than love, health, fame or security. It is world alism that I want—for I know this alone can banish the mis- of the world I now live in. It will free the factory slaves, farm drudges, it will set women free, and restore the Negro o its human rights. I know that the world will be beautiful he sunlight of proletarian brotherhood; meanwhile, the And I want Socialism so much that I accept this fierce, urle as my fate in time; I accept its disciplines.

## Upton Sinclair

### A Most Significant Change

In the August issue of the "Living Age" I read with sorrow of soul an article by Nikolaus Basseches, reprinted from the "Neue Freie Presse" of Vienna, telling about the terrible failure which is coming in Soviet agriculture.

To put it briefly, Mr. Basseches says that by the 10th of last May the Russians had succeeded in planting less than 30 per cent of the 264 million acres called for under the Plan, "and a few weeks later the Plan was only 42.7 per cent fulfilled." There is a good deal more about this, nearly three full pages, and it winds up with the statement: "After four years of the first Five-Year Plan, which is now supposed to be completed, the total output of grain, which had risen during recent years to 21,600,000 tons in 1930 and 22,400,000 tons in 1931, will amount at most to ten million tons."

This hurt me in spirit, because I am on record as having said that the socialization of agriculture in Russia is the most significant change in the history of mankind. I have predicted that it will bankrupt small-scale peasant agriculture throughout the world, and make inevitable an agricultural revolution. The peasants of every country being the back bone of superstition and reaction, I was hopeful of change, and sad over the Basseches article.

But I remembered how many other sets of statistics I had read, over a period of fifteen years, proving the collapse of the Soviet system. I decided to wait a few days before giving way completely to despair. And sure enough, here comes the "Economic Review of the Soviet Union," published by Amtorg in New York, dated August 15th. In it I find an article headed "Results of Spring Sowing and the Harvesting Campaign." To be sure these are Soviet figures; but then, so are Mr. Basseches', I presume. I do not believe the correspondent of the "Neue Freie Presse" has been flying over Russia in an airplane and counting the number of acres which have been planted. Neither do I suppose that the correspondents of any White newspapers in Riga or Warsaw have been performing such service.

According to the figures, I learn that the results of the spring sowing campaign up to July first show that "the plantings were 99.6 per cent of the record area sown last year." I learn also that by August First the harvesting campaign "was well under way, and a total of 75.8 million acres have been harvested." Russia expects eight million extra tons of grain this year, instead of twelve million less. Also I learn that 80 per cent of the sowings this year were done by the socialized sector of State and cooperative farms. That is the thing that really counts; so believers in social progress may cheer up.

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